INFO SHEET

Veterinary Services

United States Department of Agriculture

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

August 1998

Highlights of Equine '98 Study Results: Part I

The USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) designed the Equine '98 Study to provide both participants and the equine industry with information on the United State's equine population for education and research purposes.

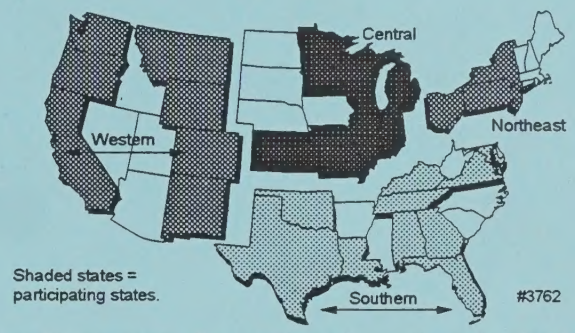
From March 16 through April 10, 1998, data were collected on equine health and management practices via personal interviews from a representative sample of equine operations in 28 states.[1] These operations represented about three-fourths of the equine population and three-fourths of operations with equids in the U.S. For this study, equid was defined as horses, miniature horses, ponies, mules, donkeys, and burros. Overall 2,904 operations with one or more equids participated in the Equine '98 Study. More detailed information on the study and the sampling methodology is available in NAHMS Equine '98 tabular summary reports.

The following information was excerpted from the first tabular summary report, *Part I: Baseline Reference of Equine Health and Management.*

Equine Demographics

- Over three-quarters (78.6 percent) of equine operations had five or fewer horses in 1997. Those operations accounted for 39.6 percent of the equine population. Operations with 20 or more horses accounted for only 3.7 percent of the operations but 27.0 percent of the equids.
- The primary use of equids on 66.8 percent of operations was pleasure. The Western and Southern regions had larger percentages of operations (20.6 and 18.4 percent, respectively) that used equids primarily for farm/ranch work than other regions.

States Participating in the Equine '98 Study by Region



- Over 90 percent of operations in each region had horses (although they may have had other equine as well). Distributions of equine species were similar among regions.
- The percentage of intact males was larger for miniature horses than for other equine types, indicating that castration was not as common a practice for miniature horses as it was for other types of equids.
- Quarter Horses represented the largest percentage (39.5 percent) of horses by breed in all regions. Breed distributions varied by region.
- The majority of resident equids (58.8 percent) were 5 to 20 years of age. A larger percentage of ponies than other equine types were 20 or more years of age.

Health and Health Management

- On over 70 percent of operations, the operator was primarily responsible for making and implementing health care decisions for resident equids. The operator's spouse held these responsibilities on about 17 percent of operations.

  Men were more likely to be the health care decisionmaker and to implement health care, particularly for operations where equids were primarily used for racing or farming/ranching.

- Veterinarians were a *very* important source of information for equine health care decisions on 84.1

[1] Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

percent of operations, by far the highest percentage for any information source.

Nearly three-quarters of operations (73.8 percent) used the services of a veterinarian at least once for resident equids in 1997. Over 40 percent of operations used a veterinarian at least once for individual animal diagnosis or treatment, vaccination consultation or service, to provide drugs or vaccines, or for diagnostic services such as a Coggins test.

- Nearly 37 percent of operations identified a veterinarian as their primary equine dental care provider, while 55.6 percent did not have a dental care provider in 1997.

- Owners/operators on about one-third of operations with a primary function of farm/ranch work and about one-third of residences with equids maintained for personal use had not heard of EIA. Over one-half of owners/operators on boarding/training and breeding facilities were knowledgeable about the disease.

  Owners/operators estimated the average cost of EIA testing was $24.65 per test (including veterinary fees, transportation and testing costs). According to USDA records, there were 1.37 million official EIA tests performed in fiscal year 1997. Therefore, the total cost to the industry was over $34 million.

  Operations' primary reasons for EIA testing were to fulfill show requirements within the state (41.4 percent of operations) followed by for interstate movement (19.2 percent). International movement of equids, equine illness, and other reasons were infrequently cited as primary reasons for EIA testing.

- At least one resident equid on 60.5 percent of operations received some kind of vaccine in 1997, meaning that resident equids were not vaccinated on nearly 40 percent of operations. The percentage of operations that administered some kind of vaccine to at least one resident equid in 1997 increased with increasing size of operation.

  The veterinarian was the primary source of vaccine for 67.7 percent of operations that administered any vaccines to resident equids, followed by feed or veterinary supply stores (22.4 percent) and catalogs (8.8 percent).

- A dewormer was given to at least one resident equid on 86.7 percent of operations in 1997, with similar percentages across regions of the country. More operations gave dewormers to equids than vaccinated at least one equid in 1997. Operation personnel administered the majority of dewormers (on 70.3 percent of operations). Veterinarians administered the majority of dewormers on only 13.0 percent of operations.

  The largest percentage of operations (62.5 percent) primarily obtained dewormers for equids from feed or veterinary supply stores, while only about one-fourth (27.0 percent) primarily obtained them from a veterinarian.

Births, Illnesses, and Deaths

- Nearly 17 percent of operations had at least one equine birth in 1997. At least 90 percent of births were live births for each type of equids.

  The mortality rate for foals in the first 30 days of life was 3.6 percent with almost one-half of deaths occurring in the first 2 days.

- Nearly 50 percent of equine operations that had at least one foal born alive routinely had foals born on pasture, and 44.2 percent had foals born in a stall. As operation size increased, the percentage of operations routinely foaling on pastures declined, and the percentage of operations using designated foaling stalls increased.

  Fewer than 20 percent of operations with live births routinely had foals tested for adequate absorption of immunoglobulins.

  Approximately one-third of operations with live foal births had a veterinarian examine newborn foals in the first 48 hours of life, three-quarters of operations treated foals' navels, and slightly more than one-third routinely gave the foal an enema in the first 48 hours.

- Injury/wounds/trauma or leg/hoof problems accounted for the greatest number of days of lost use and greatest costs for more operations in 1997 than other health conditions.

- The largest percentage of deaths for equids 30 or more days of age was attributed to old age (29.5 percent) followed by colic (17.5 percent). The percentages of deaths of equids 30 days or older from injury/wounds/trauma and leg or hoof problems totaled 17.6 percent.

For more information on the Equine '98 Study, contact:
Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health;
USDA:APHIS:VS, attn. NAHMS;
555 South Howes; Fort Collins, CO 80521; Telephone: (970) 490-8000; Internet: NAHMSinfo@usda.gov
World Wide Web: http://www.aphis.gov/vs/ceah/cahm

N283.898